

IF YOUR CHILD HAS BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED . . .

YOUR CHILD IS THE VICTIM OF
A SERIOUS CRIME

Sexual assault against any person, regardless of his or her age, is against the law. Our society's abhorrence of such acts against children is reflected in specific sections of the Canadian Criminal Code which deal with sexual offences against children.

If you know or suspect that your child, or any child, is being sexually abused contact your local Police Department, the nearest Ontario Provincial Police Detachment, or your Children's Aid Society.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE CAN HAVE LONG-TERM NEGATIVE EFFECTS FOR THE VICTIM

Your child probably will be confused, unsure of exactly what happened, and may feel guilty.

Your reaction will have a major effect on your child's response to the sexual abuse. Make it clear to your child that your anger is directed at the **offender**. NOT YOUR CHILD.

LET YOUR CHILD KNOW:

- You believe what he or she tells you.
- You are not angry with him or her.
- He or she is not responsible for the abuse, regardless of the circumstances.
- You will protect him or her from further abuse by the offender.

It's a
way of life

Remember to report crimes or suspicious activities to the police. They need your help so they, in turn, can help you in crimeproofing yourself and your community.

For more details on crimeproofing measures and local community programs contact your local police department.

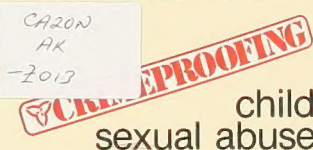


Ontario

Ministry of
the Solicitor
General



ONTARIO PARENTS



child
sexual abuse

Ontario is among the safest places in the world to live, work and play. To help make it even safer for our children, this information pamphlet has been created by the Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General with assistance from the Ontario Provincial Police and the Ontario Medical Association.

The sexual abuse of children will not go away because we ignore it. We must acknowledge its existence and use all of our resources to prevent it from happening. As responsible adults we all have a duty to see that our children are not abused.

Following our suggestions won't completely protect your child, but it will help reduce the risk of sexual abuse. Remember, all children are vulnerable.

FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

- Child sexual abuse is any incident of sexual contact between a child and a person who is in a position of authority, including rape, fondling, molestation, exhibitionism, sodomy and/or incest with or without force.
- Physical force is present in only a small percentage of child sexual abuse incidents.
- The child's view of an adult as the authority can make it much more likely that he or she can be threatened, bribed or manipulated into following adult orders.
- Children **rarely** tell about their sexual abuse because they are frightened and are told not to tell by the offender.
- Children **want** to tell but they are often afraid they will not be believed or protected.
- Children do **not** invent stories about their own sexual abuse.
- The average age of an abused child is eleven, but it is not uncommon for children three years old or younger to be sexually abused.
- Conducted surveys of previous victims indicate that a girl born today has a one-in-four chance of being sexually abused before the age of eighteen, the risk for boys is one-in-eight.
- The offender is **always** responsible for his or her own actions. Child sexual abuse is **never** the victim's fault.
- Most offenders are male—he may hold a professional job, a white collar job, a blue collar job, or no job.
- Sexual abuse is not limited to any social, economic, or ethnic class.
- A child **can** be sexually assaulted by a stranger and that incident is more likely to involve force and occur only once.
- Typical child sexual abuse will occur repeatedly within a long term relationship, because the offender abuses his position of power.
- Most offenders are not strangers. More than 85% of the offenders are known to the child: father, uncle, brother, grandfather, step-father, neighbor, family friend, babysitter.
- Child sexual abuse most often happens in the home—the victim's or the offender's.
- Child sexual abuse may eventually involve intercourse, but it typically begins with touching.

ANY CHILD, YOUR CHILD, COULD BE THE VICTIM OF SEXUAL ABUSE!!

HELP PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL ABUSE

It is not easy for parents to talk to their children about sexual abuse. Parents do not always know **what** or **how much** to tell their children. The more children know about sexual abuse and abusers the better able they will be to protect themselves and the more likely they will be to tell their parents what is happening to them.

Ideas to help your children:

- Teach your children the names for their body parts—teach them that there are parts of their bodies that are private and that no one has the right to touch without their permission.
- Help your children practice saying "no" to a touch or touching request they do not like or understand.
- Include sexual abuse information when you talk about other survival information such as how to cross the street safely.
- Teach your children to minimize their vulnerability by showing them how to respond to a telephone call or to the door bell when they are home alone—even if the other person is someone they know.
- Encourage family activities like "what if" games that help your children think about new kinds of situations that could occur—activities that can help your children feel more sure of their abilities to handle new situations, to trust their instincts, and to act in their own best interests.

WHAT TO TELL YOUR CHILDREN

"Your body is your own—you don't have to let **anyone** touch you or hurt you."

"You have my permission to say 'no' or 'don't touch me that way' to anyone—even a close relative or family friend."

"If you get uncomfortable **feelings** when someone does something to you or asks you to do something to them, come and tell me."

"Sometimes nice people—people you know—do mean things. Respecting and 'minding' adults does not mean you have to do anything they ask. If you think what they are doing or asking is wrong, come and tell me."

"If anyone, even someone you love, threatens you or tries to bribe you into doing something you feel is not right, come and tell me."

"Girls don't always have to **please** adults, and boys don't always have to be **brave** and not run away."

"Some secrets—like surprise birthday presents—are fun, but a secret that an adult says only the two of you can know is not right—come and tell me."

"IF ANY PERSON TOUCHES YOU IN A WAY THAT MAKES YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE, COME AND TELL ME. I WILL BELIEVE YOU AND WILL PROTECT YOU. IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT!"

IF YOU SUSPECT YOUR CHILD IS BEING SEXUALLY ABUSED

Children frequently do not **tell** about being sexually abused. Here are some changes that parents may observe in their child.

Physical Changes to Look for:

- Unexplained bruises or swelling of the genitals of a young boy or girl, or problems with urination.
- Vaginal or rectal bleeding, discharge or symptoms suggesting possible infection.

Behavioral Changes to Look for:

- Suddenly or continually protesting when left with someone the child knows, such as a relative, neighbor or babysitter.
- School difficulties or inability to concentrate.
- Withdrawing from usual activities.
- Unusual interest in his or her body and genitals, or in the genitals of others.
- Sleep disturbances—nightmares, trouble falling asleep, fear of the dark, a marked increase in bedwetting.
- Irritability, crankiness, unexplained crying, and/or sudden shifts in temperament.
- A return to a younger, more babyish behavior.
- Marked changes in appetite.